

Översikter och meddelanden

A State of War: Russian Leaders and Citizens Interpret the Chechen Conflict

1. Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about a need for reorientation among Russian politicians, as well as for the Russian public at large. The Soviet superpower no longer existed, and during the years immediately following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the primary successor state, i.e. the Russian Federation, experienced substantial post-imperial trauma, which was felt by both the political elite and the electorate (see e.g. Löwenhardt 1995:4-5). Several years afterwards, the Soviet Union was to some still the principal object of identification, while other groups denied the Soviet period and held that the 'real' Russia was the one of the Tsars (Lapidus 1995, Calhoun 1996:6, cf. Whitefield and Evans 1996:234-236, McAuley 1997:300).

One might well have thought that the Russian leaders, paradoxically, could benefit from the war over Chechnya in 1994-1996. Here was a chance to demonstrate resolve not to allow further dismemberment of Russia. Here was perhaps also a chance to mobilize popular sentiments to the support of the territorial integrity of Russia. But in order to achieve such mobilization, some kind powerful triggering device would be called for. It has frequently been argued that once the utter failure of Soviet communism was a fact, nationalism quickly moved in to fill the ideological void (Grannes and Heradstveit 1994:153, 241, McAuley 1997:27, Oracheva 1997:89). Hence, nationalism would

seem a likely triggering device in the context at hand.

It is a well established phenomenon that the existence of a clear-cut, consistently negative enemy image, aside from heightening the risk of outward aggressiveness, also might foster internal cohesion (Bloom 1990:113-115, Grannes and Heradstveit 1994:249-250, cf. Elbedour *et al.* 1997:220, Kaplowitz 1990:61, McAuley 1997: 152, 303). In this case, the Chechens were the candidates for being demonized in such a manner. In a sense, they would seem ideal; they were a people from the Caucasus and had as such repeatedly been singled out and scorned by vocal Russian politicians (Zhirinovskii 1993), and they were Muslims, which might breed general suspicions among Russians that are as a rule Orthodox Christians by faith.

Apart from denigrating the opponent, one might expect another, more positive line to emerge from the official argumentation in a time of crisis. That line is to glorify oneself, one's own nation, state and government. We are here addressing the subject of national self-images. The general concept of images comprises, in our understanding, 'cognitive organizing devices and information filters' (Cottam 1992:3). The national self-images contain as a rule idealized stereotypes of the 'in-nation', which are culturally shared and perpetuated (Hirshberg 1993:78). They often draw upon myths and memories of a glorified past (Lebow 1981:197). Supposedly, the maintenance of a positive national self-image is crucial for continued public acquiescence and support for government. Such a self-image has an integrative function and 'helps transform an aggregate of human beings into a collectivity imbued with a common sense of purpose' (Hirshberg 1993:78, Lebow 1981:197). A negative self-image, on the other hand, bodes ill for domestic cohesion. Like with images of the opponent, one may postulate a link

between national self-images, on the one hand, and external behaviour, on the other (Lebow 1981:192-228, Kaplowitz 1990). To be sure, this nexus is one indicating increased probability of outcome, rather than pre-ordained consequences.

At this point one must, however, appreciate a complication for the Yeltsin Administration. And this brings us to modifying the concept of 'national self-images' and instead prompts us to use the broader term 'collective self-images'. In no way can today's Russian Federation be said to make up a nation-state. More than 150 nationalities coexist in the territory of the Russian Federation, even though the Russians dominate by far. This is what the dichotomy between *russkie* and *rossiyane* is all about (Tishkov 1997; McAuley 1997:28, fn. 27). The latter term denotes all citizens of the Russian Federation, whether Russians, Tatars, German, Bashkirs, or Kalmyks, whereas the latter refers solely to ethnic Russians.

By means of triggering devices one might expect appeals to Russianness to be far more powerful than appeals to citizens of the Russian Federation. However, they would also be more risky, and might potentially pit Russians against other nationalities within the Russian Federation. This paper aims to establish which strategy was used to what extent by the Russian leaders in their public statements on the war over Chechnya.

In a crisis situation as vital, prolonged and tense as the Chechen one, the propaganda aspects will most probably figure prominently in whatever statements are made by leading politicians. The publicly communicated images need not, and in many cases probably will not, conform to the one privately held by the politician in question, but it will nevertheless be highly important. It is important since it gives certain restrictions to policy-making, and if skilfully conveyed via print media and television, it helps to mould the images held by the public, and this might be instrumental in eliciting desired responses of support.

Politicians of today's democratizing Russia have to take the views of the citizens into account. If they do not, they may find themselves

voted out of office. We therefore purport to investigate to what extent the publicly projected images of the politicians harmonized with sentiments among the population at large.¹ To this end, we will use data gathered by the internationally renowned Moscow institute VTSIOM (Russian Centre for Public Opinion and Market Research). The material has been generated through surveys of public opinion in the Russian Federation in the 1990s, which have been conducted by using a stratified nation-wide sample of the whole Russian society.²

The main questions of our essay are the following: What images of the Chechen opponents can be inferred from statements on the war by leading Russian politicians? What collective self-images can be inferred? To what extent did the publicly projected self-images and the images of the Chechen opponents harmonize with citizens' views?

2. The arguments

Russia's territorial integrity

Russia's fateful Chechnya operation started on December 11, 1994. In a decree signed by President Yeltsin on that very day, the reasons for the dispatch of Russian troops into Chechnya were spelled out:

The government's actions were prompted by the threat to the integrity of Russia and to the safety of its citizens both in Chechnya and elsewhere, and by the possibility of the destabilization of the political and economic situation (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 14 December 1996).

A few days later, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin used a scheduled speech at a national women's conference to elaborate the reasons for the operation. Several contributing factors were mentioned, and these could in turn be grouped into two larger clusters: 1. The territorial integrity of the Russian state had been undermined, and nationality-based and religious discord was stirred up in Chechnya, threatening to destabilize the situation even further. The region therefore threatened to become a zone of permanent instability. 2. Criminal elements, drug-business and

weapons-trade chains had reigned supreme in Chechnya and reached out all the way towards the heart of Russia (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* 14 December, 1996).

In January 1995 Chernomyrdin reiterated that the armed operation was necessary because of the fate of the Russian state and of Russian democracy (*Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, henceforth *CDPSP* 1995, No. 3, p. 7). Still in April 1996, as the President seemed to have accepted the need for conducting talks with the 'Chechen side', he remained categorically opposed to any notion of Chechnya being 'independent and outside Russia'. That would amount to a 'violation of Russia's integrity and a violation of the Constitution' (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 April 1996). As Yeltsin in early June dramatically and unexpectedly through a personal visit brought the presidential campaign to Chechnya, he did so 'to demonstrate that the Chechen Republic is in the Russian Federation and nowhere else' (*Segodnya*, 29 May 1996). Even in late 1996 and early 1997, when Russia had in fact given in and admitted defeat by the hands of the Chechens, this was the official Russian line (Kasaev 1996:20, *ITAR-TASS*, 20 January 1997, Rutland 1997:4). According to the mutually accepted formula, the resolution of the thorny issue of the political status of Chechnya may be postponed until the end of 2001. Be that as it may, the question is far from disarmed, and it may well flare up again.

Criminals without popular support

The official argument that illegal criminal gangs had to be disarmed and the rights of the civilian population protected was steadfastly held on to during most of the campaign in Chechnya (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 December 1994, *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, henceforth *KCA*, 1995:40368; *CDPSP* 1995, No. 3). The Chechen people had to be rescued, since it had 'become hostage to the [President Dzhokhar] Dudayev regime', which even was in the process of committing genocide against its own people (*CDPSP* 1995, No. 3, p. 9). According to Yeltsin's December 1994 appeal to the residents of the Chechen Republic, the federal authorities

had to end the activity of the illegal armed formations, normalize life in Chechnya, and restore legality and law and order (*CDPSP* 1994, No. 51, p. 3). This was echoed by the then Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, who added that the Chechnya conflict was not an ethnic conflict, rather it emanated from the seizure of power by 'a criminal group' (*CDPSP* 1994, No. 51, p. 10). Similarly, the Minister of Defence at the time, Pavel Grachev, underlined on one occasion that the conflict over Chechnya was not an external one. Instead, it was the case of 'civil disorder and gangsterism in a single country' (*CDPSP* 1995, No. 45, p. 14).

According to the official line, the Chechen Republic had become the largest base of support for political extremism, and allegedly it was the centre of gravity for all extremist and nationalist forces. As such, it had turned into a serious threat to the stability of Russia itself, and therefore, according to this line of argument adhered to for instance by Yeltsin himself, the Dudayev regime had to be apprehended at all costs (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 December 1994; *CDPSP* 1996, No. 13, p. 3).

Thus, the Moscow strategy was to rub in the message that the Chechen resistance was upheld by a clique of bandits, possessing none or meagre popular support. If successful, this strategy would have stripped the opponents of legitimacy in the eyes of the Russian public, and possibly even foreign observers. Slipping a little, the then Director of the Federal Counter Intelligence Service, Mr. Stepashin, in early 1995 indicated that the armed formations were at the most supported by 8 per cent of the population of Chechnya (*CDPSP* 1995, No. 3, p. 10). According to Moscow's statements, Russia was waging war against bandits who happened to be of Chechen origin, but it certainly did not wage war against the Chechen people as such. The latter point was for instance stressed by Chernomyrdin in January, 1995 (*CDPSP* 1995, No. 3, p. 7).³ In trying to dispel a rumour that might otherwise have caused an explosive flare, Yeltsin himself went out of his way to deny any preparations for a massive, Stalinist-style deportation of the Chechen people (*CDPSP* 1994, No. 51, p. 3). A variant of the theme that war was waged against

Chechen bandits, but not against the Chechen people, was raised by Yeltsin after the conclusion of the events unfolded by the second major Chechen rebel attack on targets outside Chechnya, namely the one striking at Kizlyar and Pervomaiskoe in Dagestan in early 1996:

Unfortunately, servicemen and civilians were killed. Dudayev and his militants bear the responsibility for this. Terrorism has no nationality. We have never equated and are not now equating the gangsters with the Chechen people. The Dudayevite militants have lost virtually all hope of receiving support from broad strata of the Chechen population... (CDPSP 1996, No. 3, p. 7).

In trying to develop the theme of the lacking popular support of the rebels, the Prime Minister indicated in 1995 that several people had been 'deceived' and therefore 'joined the armed militia' (CDPSP 1995, No. 16, p. 7). The establishment of a Chechen puppet government, headed by Doku Zavgayev, further served the end of making the militants appear as isolated extremists, fighting a war on their own. In December 1995 Zavgayev was even elected president through elections that were largely boycotted by the Chechens. For the official Russian line of argumentation, the latter did not matter much. Witness for instance Yeltsin's February 1996 address on the state of the nation before the two chambers of Parliament:

... the republic's inhabitants have made it clear that they want peace. They want to have a normal government (...) The federal forces are helping the republic's legitimate authorities organize a normal life for the population and ensure people's safety. We are prepared for talks with any political forces that are interested in establishing peace in Chechnya. But we do not intend to enter a deal with gangsters, and much less behind the back of Chechnya's legitimate government (CDPSP 1996, No. 8, p. 5).

In order to explain the success and resilience of the Chechen resistance, which there obviously was a need for in light of the alleged absence of popular support, hints were made towards foreign backing. Yeltsin himself labelled the Chechen fighters 'professional bandits' who had

been trained in Iraq, Palestine, Turkey and other countries (*Segodnya*, 20 October 1995).⁴ There was certain variation as regards the label that was bestowed upon the Chechens, the one epithet being less flattering than the other. By the time of Yeltsin's statement as to the foreign backing of the guerrillas, Grachev branded Dudayev and the military Chief of Staff, Aslan Maskhadov, 'criminals' and 'bandits' and spoke violently against the very idea of conducting any talks with them to achieve peace (CDPSP 1995, No. 45, p. 14).

As it turned out, this position was increasingly hard to hold on to. In August 1995, President Yeltsin made an unexpected *volte face*, suddenly announcing that he was prepared to meet personally with Chechen spokesmen who had popular support (CDPSP 1995, No. 35, p. 19). The statements rocked to and fro, however. On the eve of the campaign leading up to the presidential elections in June and July 1996, President Yeltsin again ruled out that he would ever conclude a deal with 'bandits' (KCA 1996: 40959). And, apparently affected by the bloodstained events in connection with the Chechen raid on the Russian town Budyonnovsk, which in June 1995 took a death toll of several hundreds, Yeltsin reacted fiercely. He labelled the Dudayevites 'armed terrorists' and observed: '...the tragedy in Budyonnovsk puts an end to the debates about the nature of the former Dudayev regime. Now everyone can see that the slogan of a national-liberation struggle was only a cover for criminals who had seized weapons' (CDPSP 1995, No. 24, p. 4).

All in all, however, there was successively a certain tendency to use the term 'militants' instead of 'bandits', thus maybe signalling a somewhat more forthcoming attitude towards the Chechens. In April 1995, as a dialogue was upheld between the two sides, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin even referred to 'the armed formations that are opposing federal troops in Chechnya' (CDPSP 1995, No. 6, p. 7). As the conflict went on, the term 'rebels' also gained currency (see e.g. CDPSP 1995, No. 35, p. 19). And starting with General Aleksandr Lebed's first trip to Chechnya in his capacity of the President's security advisor and Secretary of the Se-

curity Council, even the for quite some time cherished term 'illegal armed formations' vanished from official use (see *CDPSP* 1996, No. 41, p. 17).

When General Lebed in the summer of 1996 burst onto the scene as the newly appointed security adviser, he was the person to achieve breakthroughs in the bargaining process between Moscow and the Chechen rebels. Already while he was still a presidential candidate he on several occasions expressed himself quite differently from the men of the Kremlin. It was quite indicative, then, that he was the one to scrap the official argumentation regarding the ulterior motives of the Chechen fighters. In the straightforward world of the general the ongoing war was fuelled not by criminal empire-building ambitions, nor by the desire for an independent Chechen state. The matter was far simpler, and his arguments served to de-demonize the Chechen opposition:

...there are quite a few people in Chechnya who are no longer fighting for Dudayev or for independence but simply for their wives, children and destroyed homes. There are such people on both the Chechen and the Russian sides, and they will keep on fighting, unfortunately (*Segodnya*, 29 May 1996).

The Islam factor

The conceivable argument that Russia had to mount the Chechnya operation in order to protect itself from Islamic fundamentalism was downplayed or even avoided by official quarters. When President Yeltsin delivered his large televised address on the Chechen situation in late December 1994, he was careful to stress that: 'Russia is not an enemy of the Muslims. Any people living on Russia's territory has the right to preserve its national distinctiveness and its own traditions' (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 December 1994).

However, on the Islam factor, there was some ambivalence about the public statements. We have already cited Chernomyrdin's admonition of the religious discord that the Chechnya crisis had bred in the region. Other leading politicians spoke out more clearly on the subject. In discuss-

ing the threats levelled at contemporary Russia, General Lebed in late 1995 singled out Islamic fundamentalism as one of the most serious. He also pointed out that the front-line of the Islamic world went right through Chechnya (Halbach 1996:11). And in February 1996, coinciding in time with the launching of his presidential campaign, President Yeltsin himself accused General Dudayev of wishing to conquer all of the Caucasus, including the independent CIS states, and to turn the whole area into an Islamic state (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 April 1996; Halbach 1996:33).⁵

The anti-Islamic undercurrent was more evident in other segments of society. The Russian press from time to time pointed out that Russia was in the frontline of the battle between Christianity and Islam, and that Russia faced a situation where it had the most extended border to the Islamic world, along which new eruptions were likely to follow. While it was justified to level some criticism at Russia because of excesses in its war-making, one therefore had to show some understanding of the predicament of Russia (Malek 1996:A569).

Western scholars have observed a certain duality about the Russian outlook on the Islamic world. On the one hand, there is an outright islamophobic tendency, as personified by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. According to those views, Russia would do wisely to free itself of its Muslim periphery (Halbach 1996:7). Among the islamophobes there are also the likes of Vladimir Zhirinovskii (1993) who argue that the only way of countering the Islamic threat is to attack and subdue neighbouring Islamic lands. On the other hand, there are actually some points of convergence between Russian nationalism and Islam, for instance regarding the view that if necessary the individual has to yield to further the overall interests of the collective, and also regarding the view that the spread of Western culture should be countered as far as possible (Halbach 1996:7).

Inferior opponents

One more kind of arguments deserves to be brought up, namely those having to do with

prejudice and underestimation due to prejudice. In his presidential election platform General Lebed (1996:14) proposed that the Chechens be allowed to arrange a referendum, determining whether Chechnya should stay within the framework of the Russian Federation or not. If there was a majority in favour of remaining, then no-one would be able to argue that it was illegitimate to apply harsh measures against the Chechens in order to make them comply. If a majority decided to leave, then 'Good riddance!'

One could from time to time discern undercurrents of outright racism in the Russian debate, shown for instance by the Moscow Mayor, Yuri Luzhkov and his repeated drives to expel all Chechens from Moscow (*Segodnya*, 19 July 1996). However, the racist undercurrents were perhaps most prominently displayed by the then director of the Federal Security Service, Mikhail Barsukov. The following words were uttered by him at a press conference in January 1996, held due to the armed clashes with Chechen separatist hostage-takers at the Dagestani village of Pervomaiskoe. The Kizlyar-Pervomaiskoe affair was a bloody one, so the general may to a degree have been affected by this. Still his choice of wording was remarkable: 'One respected Chechen says of his people that a Chechen can only kill. If he cannot kill, he robs. If he cannot do that, he steals. There is no other kind of Chechen' (Bal'burov 1996:1).

So, somewhere deep down there might also have been sentiments that the war against Chechnya was actually waged against an inferior kind of people. Or, differently put, if there ever was to be a civilising mission for Russia, this would be the proper place to start.

A related aspect, which might help to account for the Russian decision to launch the military campaign against Chechnya in the first place, is the phenomenon of underestimation. And what else than underestimation may account for Pavel Grachev's infamous and bragging estimate that two hours and a regiment of paratroopers would be enough to bring down the Dudayev regime? However, he was soon to become somewhat more humble. Already in February 1995 he conceded that due to the mountainous terrain and the

guerrilla tactics of the Chechen forces, the elimination of all 'bandits' in Chechnya might take a few years yet (*KCA* 1995:40420). He was joined by military men who by and by became apt to see that the campaign might go on for substantial amounts of time (see e.g. Col. Gen Shevtsov in *Segodnya*, 29 April 1995). To a degree, Russian decision makers may have become victims of the Russian propaganda, actually believing that the Chechen resistance was put up by small armed cliques of bandits that had no or almost no support among the Chechen population. Thus, they were in for some rather unpleasant surprises.

The arguments against a peaceful settlement

Clearly, the Russian decision makers created some future difficulties for themselves by speaking out too categorically on the conflict. Harsh statements had a tendency to keep bouncing back. When the Khasavyurt deal of 31 August 1996 on the principles for the peaceful regulation of the conflict had been struck between Russia and Chechnya, as represented by General Lebed and Colonel Maskhadov, condemnations were fierce from many political quarters. A noted communist parliamentarian, Viktor Ilyukhin, warned that the agreement might 'set a dangerous precedent' (*CDPSP* 1996, No. 47, p. 7). The leading nationalist Sergei Baburin held that the accord 'posed a direct threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian state' (*CDPSP* 1996, No. 35, p. 4). Likewise, the front runner of the Communist party, Gennadi Zyuganov, remarked that the deal violated the Russian Constitution, and held it to pose an 'imminent threat to Russia's territorial integrity'. Lest that integrity was maintained, 'the splitting apart and destruction of Russia' would begin, 'leading to the gravest consequences' (*Segodnya*, 4 September 1996). On another occasion he argued that the Khasavyurt accords signified 'the *de jure* start of the dismemberment of the Russian Federation' (Fuller 1996:1). It should come as no surprise, though, that Vladimir Zhirinovskii was one of those who expressed himself most dramatically: 'Chechnya is only a small

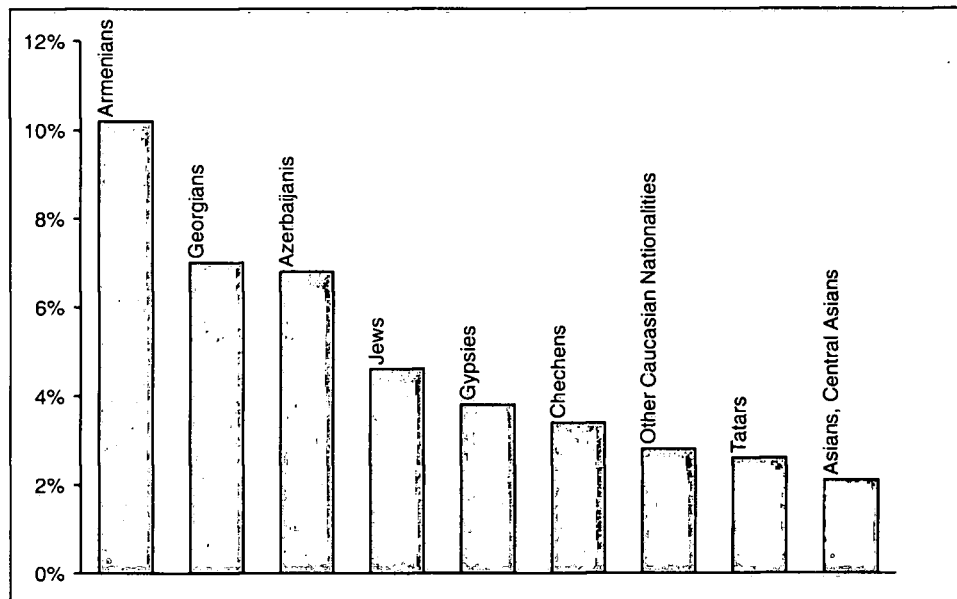


Figure 1. Which nationalities evoke in you feelings of particular antipathy, aversion?

part of a plan to destroy Russia. After the year 2000 the border of Russia's territory will run through Tambov, Voronezh, Moscow, and Arkhangelsk' (CDPSP 1996, No. 35, p. 4).

Even the ill-reputed Liberal Democrat leader was, however, quite low-key as compared to the ultra-nationalist mouthpiece, *Zavtra*, which made the following venomous observations:

Through all this utter farce and vileness, one discerns that Lebed is amputating Chechnya and that soon there'll be yet another bloody stump dangling from Russia. The surprising thing is that one can already foresee the apotheosis of the peacemaking general, Nobel laureate and President of an armless and legless Russia. And we who surrendered the Soviet Union without a fight, who abandoned our Russian and non-Russian brothers to the whims of fate and snapped up ownership of factories, apartments and dacha plots, who re-elected Yeltsin to our detriment, will yet see a dismembered Russia; the axe with its hacking sound will pass through our own thresholds, through our own beds and cradles, and no one will respond to our belated wails (CDPSP 1996, No. 36, p. 12).

3. Public sentiments

Prior to the war

Already in November 1991 President Dzhokhar Dudayev had proclaimed the Republic of Chechnya an independent state, and in March 1992 the Chechen parliamentary body had adopted a constitution for what was called the independent Republic of Ichkeria (see e.g. Flikke 1996:149). In the same month, Chechnya had together with Tatarstan refused to join the other 18 autonomous republics of the Russian Federation in signing the federal treaty. The conflict between the central authorities in Moscow and the Chechen leadership was in other words escalating at this point in time, but there were so far no armed confrontations. In the spring of 1992 VTSIOM surveyed 1566 respondents from 11 regions of the Russian Federation, whereby particular attention was given to threat perceptions and negative attitudes towards other nationalities. When asked to mention which nationalities they harboured particular sympathy for, the respondents gave Slavic peoples the highest ratings. Chechens were mentioned by

less than one per cent, which is certainly not a sign of cordial relations, even if it is not quite as bad as it sounds considering that quite a number of the nationalities included in the questionnaire was not mentioned at all (*Omnibus* 1992, No. 5). While four out of ten were willing to name a 'favourite' nationality, even fewer, three out of ten, admitted to feeling aversion towards a certain people. This should indicate that xenophobia was not very widespread among Russian citizens. Only a few nations were listed as particularly unpleasant by more than one per cent of the respondents. Among these were Jews, Gypsies, and nationalities of the Caucasus (*Omnibus* 1992, No. 5).

Moreover, in 1992 the respondents were asked to name nationalities which disturbed the inter-ethnic relations in the former Soviet Union. Only peoples of the Caucasus were mentioned by more than 20% of the respondents. The Armenians scored worst, followed by the Azerbaijanis, the Chechens, and the Georgians (*Omnibus* 1992, No. 5). One explanation of the aversion to Armenians and Azerbaijanis might be that the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh had been exacerbated in 1992. This by itself is not a sufficient explanation, as other warring parties – e.g. Tajiks and Moldovans – were not mentioned by any significant percentage of the respondents. However, coupled with a traditional aversion to peoples of the Caucasus, which is often said to be due to conflicts between a primarily agrarian society and commercially inclined societies, this could be a contributing explanation to the hostile attitudes towards these nationalities (Gudkov and Bocharova 1994:17). The Chechens were not extraordinarily disliked in 1992, but out of the 48 groups listed they were among the small minority to be disliked by a significant percentage of the respondents.

By January 1993 the situation in Chechnya had deteriorated further. In November the Russian leadership had vainly used military force in a limited attempt to bring Chechnya back in line. However, neither this incident, nor other reasons of discord between Chechnya and Moscow seem to have provoked any considerable worries among the Russian citizens at the time. When VTSIOM asked respondents to list what events

Table 1. Threats to society (per cent).

	Do you think that any of the following actors constitute a threat to our society?		
	Yes	No	No answer
Other countries of the CIS	33.7	63.8	2.4
National minorities within our country	32.4	65.1	2.5
Islamic states	31.6	63.4	4.7
China	27.5	68.0	4.5
Old Communists	25.9	71.7	2.9
The US	24.7	71.0	4.3
Germany	17.0	79.1	3.9

Source: *Omnibus* 1993, No. 4, VTSIOM nationwide survey. Number of respondents: 1,973. Response rate (the number accepting to participate in the poll): 78.0%.⁶

in what countries of the world, or regions within the former USSR, that concerned them most, only 3.4% mentioned Chechnya. Yet, this is not surprising when considering the seriousness of other conflicts going on in 1992, i.e. in Nagorno-Karabakh, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Of these, the Russian public was most anxious about the wars in Moldova and Tajikistan. Notably, the respondents expressed more concern about the Caucasus as a whole and entire states of the Caucasus than about individual hot-spots like Chechnya, Ossetia, and Abkhazia (*Omnibus* 1993, No. 1).

A few months later, VTSIOM asked respondents more specifically about threats to the Russian society. The greatest threats were not perceived to originate from traditional enemies such as the US, Germany or China, but from closer surroundings. The respondents feared other states within the CIS, national minorities within the Russian Federation, and 'Islamic states'. The latter could refer both to states of Central Asia and the Caucasus and to states in the 'far abroad' (Table 1).⁷

Gudkov and Bocharova (1994:17-18) show by analyzing poll data that while the aversion to Jews was stable during the period of 1992-93, the antipathy towards peoples of the Caucasus in general and Chechens in particu-

lar increased significantly. A later analysis shows that xenophobia rose steadily during the first half of the 1990s, peaked in 1995 and decreased somewhat in 1996, both in general and towards peoples of the Caucasus (Gudkov 1996). Presumably, the loss of Soviet identity and the disappointment with the democratic order frustrated the population and increased ethnic xenophobia in the early 1990s. The fears of the direction the society had taken were projected onto peoples of the Caucasus, among which Chechens were particularly 'demonized' (Gudkov and Bocharova 1994:17-18). The extensive media coverage of the 'Chechen Mafia', which in the public mind is closely linked to increasing crime in society, probably played its part.

During the war

A few years later, in the summer of 1996, VTSIOM asked respondents about who, to their minds, were the enemies of the country (table 2). At this juncture, the Chechen war had already been going on for one year and a half. Notably, the Chechens and their leader came in third position among the enemies, and for the sake of comparison it can be mentioned that they were singled out by over twice as many as were the US. Three out of four respondents thought that Russia had enemies, and most of those located them within the CIS or even within the country itself. This is to say that the greatest enemies were again not perceived to be the evils of the past. The vast majority listed either certain domestic groups, such as organized crime, corrupted civil servants and speculators, or Chechnya, Dudayev and Chechens. A rather small percentage listed Muslims as enemies of Russia.

During the whole period between 1993 and 1996 problems related to everyday life were perceived as far more serious than risks of ethnic violence and armed conflicts at the borders of Russia.⁸ Even so, the emphasis altered after the outbreak of the war in Chechnya. Concern about ethnic relations and military conflicts on Russia's borders rose significantly during 1994, and in January 1995 it was about three times higher than it had been a year before (Bocharova 1995).

Table 2. Enemies of the country (per cent).

If such enemies exist, who, according to your view, are they primarily? (The respondent was allowed to list several.)	
The Mafia, organized crime	30.5
Corrupt officials, bureaucrats	20.1
Chechnya, Chechens, Dudayev	15.6
Speculators, swindlers	10.0
The West in general, the governments of the West	9.0
The US	6.9
The present regime of Russia, Yeltsin, the government	6.2
Businessmen, 'the new Russians'	5.6
Fascists, nationalists, chauvinists (Barkashov)	5.1
Financial organisations of the West, 'financial bigwigs'	4.6
Ourselves, Russians, the Russian character	4.2
China	4.2
Communists (Zyuganov, Anpilov)	3.9
'Peoples of the Caucasus'	3.7
Zhirinovskii and his supporters	3.4
The Baltic countries	3.2
Muslims, inhabitants of Central Asia	3.1
Japan	3.0
NATO, international militarists	2.6
Germany	1.8
Democrats (Gaidar, Chubais)	1.5
Other former Soviet Republics	1.4
Other	1.4
Parliamentarians, the Duma (former/current)	1.2
Gorbachev	1.0
Jews	0.7
Ukraine	0.3
Hard to say/no answer	29.3

Source: Express 1996, No. 7, VTSIOM nationwide survey. Number of respondents: 1,600. Response rate: 76.0 %.

The anxieties knew no social boundaries, but were particularly great among younger citizens, city dwellers, and inhabitants of the southern regions of Russia, which was quite natural, considering the proximity to the front (Bocharova 1995:2).⁹ Not only were the residents of the regions close to Chechnya more worried about the war than others, the awareness of the problems in Chechnya also arose much earlier in these regions. Residents of the North Caucasian region

felt greater aversion to Chechens in 1992, were more worried about ethnic tension in 1993, and viewed Chechens as enemies to a higher degree than residents of most of the other regions in 1996 (*Omnibus* 1992, No. 5, *Omnibus* 1993, No. 1, *Express* 1996, No. 7). People living in these regions saw the effects of the war more directly, and were also disturbed by the exodus of refugees and migrants from the warring regions of the Caucasus which caused problems in already densely populated neighbouring areas like Stavropol, Rostov *oblast* and Krasnodar *krai* (Gudkov 1993).

However, once the war had broken out, it rapidly turned into a country-wide concern. This was much due to the widespread and relatively free media coverage (Grant 1995:3) and to the fact that a vast number of young men were sent to Chechnya as soldiers, of whom about 4 000 were to be killed and 18-20 000 wounded.¹⁰ The war was very unpopular right from its beginning in 1994. The Soldiers' Mothers became one of the most visible signs of resistance and sent their first delegation to Grozny only a month after the outbreak of the war. The awareness of and anxieties about the war continued to rise during 1995 and when interviewees in January 1996 were asked to name the most important event during the past year, nothing scored higher than the war in Chechnya.¹¹

When VTSIOM monitored specific opinions on the war in March 1995, the bombing of Grozny had already taken place. The army was now trying to take the towns of Gudermes, Argun and Shali. At this stage, one out of four found it too difficult to name what they thought would be the consequences of the battle in Chechnya, but among those who did, almost everyone believed in a pessimistic scenario, such as 'a long bloody war in Chechnya' or 'the conflict will spread to other regions in Northern Caucasus'. Very few thought that the official goal of the operation, to increase the constitutional order and wholeness of Russia – through the pacification of the Chechen opposition – would be reached (*Monitoring* 1995, No. 3).

Perhaps most striking about the results was the almost total lack of confidence in the President's actions. Only one out of a hundred thought that

Table 3. Evaluation of Yeltsin's handling of the Chechen conflict (per cent).

How do you evaluate Boris Yeltsin's handling of Russia's policies towards Chechnya?	
Wholly positive	1.5
Rather positive	7.4
Rather negative	28.6
Very negative	52.4
Hard to say	10.2
Total	100.0

Source: *Express* 1996, No. 3, VTSIOM nationwide survey. Number of respondents: 1,584. Response rate: 80.0 %.

the war would enhance the President's authority (*Monitoring* 1995, No. 3). This tendency persisted throughout the year. When respondents in the beginning of 1996 were asked to characterize the President, the most frequently chosen alternative was that Yeltsin was 'the present president of Russia', but in second position came the not very flattering statement 'he is responsible for the war in Chechnya' (*Express* 1996, No. 3). At this stage, only 9% of the interviewees thought that Yeltsin had handled the relations with Chechnya well or fairly well (Table 3).

By this time, the war had entered another critical stage. In January 1996 a group of Chechen fighters took hostages in Kizlyar and Pervomaiskoe, a crisis which did not end until Russian troops heavy-handedly stormed the village of Pervomaiskoe. In March the war intensified again, with fierce battles over the villages of Barmut, Orekhovo and Staryi Achkoi. When respondents a few months later were asked what they demanded from a presidential candidate in order to support him, the most frequent answer was 'to end the war in Chechnya' (*Express* 1996, No. 8).

The experiences during the protracted war had created a widespread pessimism about the prospects of settling the conflict. A majority held Russia's policies towards Chechnya to be a complete failure, and the greatest percentage of respondents was pessimistic about the scenario of a quick, peaceful termination of the conflict

(*Express* 1996, No. 8).¹² Yet, the leadership was finally coming to realize that the war had to end, if only because it was a necessary step to take to secure Yeltsin's re-election in June/July 1996. Yeltsin's opinion-poll ratings fell rapidly directly after the armed intervention in December 1994. Surveys conducted in February/March 1995 showed that 57% of the population considered Russian actions in Chechnya 'unacceptable, no matter the objective', while in April/May 71% thought so (Grant 1995, 'Public Dissatisfaction Intensifies in Russia' 1995). At the end of 1995 only 2% of the respondents of a VTSIOM poll expressed total support for the president (Rose and White 1996:22-25). In February 1996, Yeltsin conceded in an interview that he would not be able to win the presidential elections lest he ended the war in Chechnya (*OMRI Daily Digest*, Part I, 9 February 1996). In the following month he announced his first peace proposal. The peace process accelerated after the killing of Dudayev on April 22, after which Zelimkhan Yandarbiev took over the negotiations in his capacity of new acting President. In the end of May the Chechen leaders went to Moscow to negotiate a cease-fire agreement.

During the most hectic days of the presidential campaign, Yeltsin made his brief visit to Grozny, where he for the first time proclaimed the war to be over. Still, this step does not seem to have made up for his earlier actions. Soon before the presidential elections in June, respondents were asked anew how Yeltsin had performed in the Chechen conflict, and once again the majority condemned his actions. When asked for their opinion on the solution of the conflict, the majority preferred an immediate withdrawal of the troops to a withdrawal after the restoration of order in Chechnya (*Express* 1996, No. 13). Despite the peace agreement reached in June, and despite the fact that Yeltsin had ordered the start of the Russian retreat from Chechnya, the battles intensified only four days after Yeltsin's re-election in July. Soon thereafter Russian troops attacked villages in southern Chechnya with aircraft and artillery. The fighting continued until Chechen troops re-conquered Grozny in August. It was not until Au-

gust 31 that Maskhadov and Lebed could sign an agreement on terminating the war. The peace deal brokered by Lebed was in January 1997 seen as the most positive development of the year by 80% of the respondents in a poll performed by the Russian Independent Institute for Social and National Issues (*OMRI Daily Digest*, Part I, 17 January 1997).

5. Conclusions

In this essay more has been revealed about the conferred images of the opponents of the Kremlin than about publicly projected Russian collective self-images. There are several conclusions to be drawn. First of all, the Russian leadership tried to create an image of a strong and unified state, caring for its citizens and actively combating banditism and crime. There was a need to keep Russia strong, to safeguard its territorial integrity, its Constitution and to maintain stability in the Federation. This strong Russia strove to take care of all its citizens, not only ethnic Russians, but also the alleged vast majority of Chechens, which was badly treated and more or less taken hostage by the Dudayev regime. According to some allegations, even a genocide was taking place. Secondly, there was some ambivalence about Russia's relationship to the Islamic world. Even though Yeltsin on occasion stressed that the war on recalcitrant Chechnya was neither a war on the Chechen people, nor on Islam, the very same Yeltsin could also be heard accusing Dudayev of wishing to turn the whole of the Caucasus into a single Islamic state, or indicating that foreign Muslim states had funded the Chechen resistance. Thirdly, one could perhaps also discern, at least among officials and politicians close to the President and Prime Minister, tendencies to think of Russians as of a superior people, having a right to carry on a civilising mission among inferior neighbours. At any rate, Chechens were quite belittled by Barsukov and Luzhkov.

One thing that the Moscow leadership did not do was to draw parallels from history when trying to justify the Chechnya campaign. This was understandable, since many parallels would

have had to be negative and bring the not-so-glorious experience of the Soviet Union to mind. For the opposition, however, recent history proved a source of negative inspiration. This was particularly so in the wake of the August 1996 Khasavyurt agreement concluded by General Lebed and Colonel Maskhadov. Here, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was vividly recalled. The Russian surrender of Chechnya, the argument went, was only the first part of a plan to destroy and give up all of Russia. Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, would become dismembered, due to the schemes of a hostile international environment and crooked and cowardly top politicians in Moscow.

So, quite clearly the prevailing image of the Chechen opponents is emerging. The enemy camp consisted of a criminal clique, devoid of all popular support and because of this abusing its own people. To the extent that the theme of the inferior opponents was brought up, this also seemed to indicate the existence of purely colonial images of Chechnya (cf. Herrman and Fischerkeller 1995:428). Following the logic of this, it was according to the Russian political elite only right and proper that Russia should keep up the behaviour of a true colonial power.

We have seen that there was widespread popular concern about the activities of organized crime and that a substantial part of the citizens of the Russian Federation took quite cool stances to peoples of the Caucasus, and to a degree to Islam. Furthermore, Chechnya, Dudayev personally, and Chechens in general were regarded as threats to Russia, and indeed more menacing than traditional enemies like the US and NATO. All in all, this foundation should have provided fertile ground for the propaganda of the government. Apparently, however, the government did not risk this. President Yeltsin and his team chose instead to keep trying to exploit appeals to *rossiyane*, about the need to keep the Russian Federation together and to take care of all its well-behaving citizens. They were most careful not to appeal to the decidedly more powerful togetherness of *russkie*. Instead of pitting Russians against Chechens, they tried to draw the dichotomy of responsible leaders of the Russian Federation that were challenged by a band of

criminal usurpers in another part of the Russian Federation. In spite of the efforts of some opposition leaders, notably Zhirinovskii, to exploit the muddy waters of fierce nationalism, they by and large abstained from playing the ethnic card. Thus, they avoided to walk the tightrope this would have amounted to in face of the multitude of nationalities and confessions inside the Russian Federation.

Those were the advantages, but there were also some drawbacks to this line. The emotional bonds keeping citizens of the Russian Federation together were fairly weak and artificial, and hence the politicians' repeated appeals for the need of territorial wholeness and integrity elicited a lukewarm response. The popular support for the war never came into being; instead the war effort was immensely unpopular and seemed at a time on the point of costing the President his office. There were several reasons for this, primarily of course the heavy death toll, the appalling numbers of maimed and wounded, and the severe economic strain on a country that already before the war had been pretty badly off. Actually, the citizens were more concerned about problems related to daily life than about conflicts with other peoples. Also, one should keep in mind that large parts of the population apparently still identified with the Soviet Union at least as much as with the Russian Federation. Even if the messages concerning the need to maintain the present set-up of the Russian Federation may not have left them indifferent, most seemed to think that it was not worth a painful, protracted war. Not even acts of terrorism, like those committed in connection with the events in Budyonnovsk and Pervomaiskoe, were enough to turn the tide.

Bo Petersson – Charlotte Wagnsson

Notes

1. This essay is an early report from the research project "Russian Self-Images and Foreign Policy Orientations in a Time of Change", which is funded by the Research Council of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

2. The data presented in this study result from polls conducted by the Russian Centre for Public Opinion and Market Research, VTSIOM. Its regular monthly polls monitor political and economic behaviour and attitudes, and use a standard national sample of about 2 000 respondents at 100 survey points. The interviews are conducted with a stratified nation-wide sample of the whole of the Russian society. A regular *Omnibus* was conducted until 1993, when it was replaced by a *Monitoring*. In 1995 the regular *Express* was added to the research programme.

The sampling methods for the *Monitoring* follows the gathering of the official statistics, which divides the Federation into 11 macro-economic regions. In regions including so-called autonomous administrative units, the macro-region is further sub-divided in order to take the ethnic composition of the territories into account. A number of autonomous areas in the far North and in the North Caucasus, representing 5.5 per cent of the total population, are excluded.

The field staff distributes questionnaires to the respondents (adults aged 16 and above for *Omnibuses* and *Monitoringi*, 18 and above for *Expressy*) and wait for them to complete them. In case the respondent is unable to fill in the questionnaire, the interviewer reads out the questions to him/her and fills in the answer given (for the *Expressy*, only face-to-face interviews are used). The average duration of an interview is 30-40 minutes. A multiple regression analysis using gender, town size, age and education is undertaken for each region to produce weights which reduce differences between census figures and sample responses. The regions are weighted to match the regional census population.

The *Omnibuses* were based upon the same sampling methods as above, the only exception being that the country was divided into a larger number of regions as compared to the 11 macro-economic regions. The methods for *Expressy* differ from the methods described in the following ways: First, about 60 sampling points are used, as compared to 102 in *Monitoringi*. Second, the quotas at the last stage are based on gender, age, and education while in *Monitoring* they are based on random route and the first-birthday method. The number of respondents is larger for *Monitoring*, accordingly, the field work takes about 4-5 days in *Express* studies and about 2.5 weeks in *Monitoring*.

3. The theme was also taken up by the former President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev (*CDPSP* 1996, No. 36, p. 10).

4. In connection with the Budyonovsk crisis earlier that year, nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskii had hinted at foreign involvement on the part of Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan (*CDPSP* 1995, No. 24, p. 7).

5. In December 1994 the then Deputy Prime Minister, Sergei Shakhrai, discussed the consequences of a secession of Chechnya from Russia. This would lead to a 'cordon sanitaire along Russia's western border, the break-up of neighbouring Dagestan and the closing of the Straits by Turkey' (*CDPSP* 1994, No. 51, p. 10).

6. In this paper, response rates are listed for all tables and figures. For some questions more than one answer is possible, which usually gives the result that replies *in toto* are above 100 per cent.

7. In an analysis of a similar opinion poll in 1993, Gudkov (1993:14) also concluded that the greatest enemies were not the countries of NATO, but, on the one hand countries of the 'near abroad', and on the other hand 'inner enemies'.

8. These findings are based on an analysis of *Monitoringi* 1993, No. 3, 7, 11; 1994, No. 2; 1995, No. 1, 5; 1996, No. 1.

9. This corresponds to an analysis of the citizens' views of Chechens in 1993, which shows that the most negative feelings prevailed among younger people, workers in the private sector, people with higher education, specialists, qualified workers, people with high incomes and citizens living in Moscow, St. Petersburg and in the southern region of Russia (Gudkov and Bocharova 1994:19).

10. According to official Russian sources 3 700 – 4 100 of the soldiers died, 1 200 – 1 900 are reported missing and 18 000 – 20 000 were wounded, while the Memorial Association, which has been keeping track of Russian soldiers killed during the 21-month long war, reports that 4 379 Russian servicemen from the Russian Army and Interior Troops were killed (*OMRI Daily Digest*, vol. 1, 14 January 1996).

11. The war was mentioned by 55.2% of the respondents as compared to, for example, the duma elections in December, which were listed by 27.2% ('Monitoring peremen': osnovnye tendentsii' 1996: 5).

12. The pessimism about the possibilities of ending the war was also shown in focus-group discussions conducted by USIA in December 1995 (Dobson 1996:9-10).

References

- Bal'buurov, D, 1996. Pobeditelei ne sudyat. A zhal', *Moskovskie novosti*, no. 3, 1.
- Bloom, W, 1990. *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bocharova, O. A, 1995. Ostrota obshchestvennykh problem v 1994 g., *Informatsionnyi Byulleten' Monitoringa*, no. 2, 32-33.
- Calhoun, C, 1996. Identity Politics and the Post-Communist Societies, *ARENA Working Paper*, no. 20. Oslo: ARENA.
- Cottam, M. L, 1992. Recent Developments in Political Psychology, p 1-18 in Cottam, M.L and Shih, C (eds) 1992, *Contending Dramas. A Cognitive Approach to International Organizations*. New York: Praeger.
- Dobson, R, 1996. *Russian Public Opinion and the 1996 Presidential Election: Views from Four Russian Towns*. Washington: US Information Agency.
- Elbedour, S, Bastien, D. T and Center, B. A, 1997. Identity Formation in the Shadow of Conflict: Projective Drawings by Palestinian and Israeli Arab Children from the West Bank and Gaza, *Journal of Peace Research* 34, 217-231.
- Express*, 1996. No. 3. Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Express*, 1996. No. 7. Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Express*, 1996. No. 8. Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Express*, 1996. No. 13. Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Flikke, G, 1996. Tsjetsjenia-krisen: etspeilbilde av russisk innenrikspolitikk, *Internasjonal Politikk*, 54, 147-169.
- Fuller, L, 1996. The Russian-Chechen agreement: pullout or sellout?, *OMRI Analytical Briefs*, 26 November.
- Grannes, A – Heradstveit, D, 1994. *Etnisk nasjonalisme. Folkegrupper og konflikter i Kaukasia og Sentral-Asia*. Oslo: TANO.
- Grant, S, 1995. *Russians Oppose Chechen War. Also against foreign involvement*. Washington: U S Information Agency.
- Gudkov, L. D, 1993. Etnicheskie problemy v Rossii: vozmozhnost' sistematskikh issledovaniy, *Informatsionnyi Byulleten' Monitoringa*, no. 6, 8-15.
- Gudkov, L. D, 1996. Etnicheskie fobii v strukture nationalnoi identifikatsii, *Informatsionnyi Byulleten' Monitoringa*, no. 5, 22-27.
- Gudkov, L. D – Bocharova, O. A, 1994. Ierarkhiya etnitskikh stereotipov naseleniya, *Informatsionnyi Byulleten' Monitoringa*, no. 1, 17-19.
- Halbach, U, 1996. Der Islam in Russland, *Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien*, no. 34. Köln: Der Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien.
- Herrmann, R. K – Fischerkeller, M. P, 1995. Beyond the enemy image and spiral model: cognitive strategic research after the cold war, *International Organization* 49, 415-450.
- Hirshberg, M. S, 1993. The Self-Perpetuating National Self-Image: Cognitive Biases in Perceptions of International Interventions, *Political Psychology* 14, 77-98.
- Kaplowitz, N, 1990. National Self-Images, Perception of Enemies, and Conflict Strategies: Psychopolitical Dimensions of International Relations, *Political Psychology*, 11, 39-82.
- Kasaev, A, 1996. Chechnya. Moscow's U-Turn, *War Report*, November-December, 19-20.
- Lapidus, G. W, 1995. Introduction, (relevant pages not numbered), in Lapidus, G. W. and de Nevers, R (eds) *Nationalism, Ethnic Identity and Conflict Management in Russia Today*. Stanford: Center for International Security and Arms Control.
- Lebed', A, 1996. *Pravda i poryadok. Programmnyi manifest*.
- Lebow, R, N, 1981. *Between Peace and War. The Nature of International Crisis*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Löwenhardt, J, 1995. *The Reincarnation of Russia. Struggling with the Legacy of Communism, 1990-1994*. Harlow: Longman.
- Malek, M, 1996. Russlands Tschetschenien-Krieg: Rechtsverletzungen, Massaker, Lager, *Osteuropa-Archiv*, 46, A 553-A569.
- McAuley, M, 1997. *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Monitoring*, 1993. No. 3, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring*, 1993. No. 7, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring*, 1993. No. 11, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring*, 1995. No. 1, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring*, 1995. No. 3, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring*, 1995. No. 5, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring*, 1996. No. 1, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Monitoring peremen': osnovnye tendentsii, 1996. *Informatsionnyi Byulleten' Monitoringa*, no. 1, 3-6.
- Omnibus*, 1992. No. 5, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Omnibus*, 1993. No. 1, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Omnibus*, 1993. No. 4, Moscow: VTSIOM.
- Oracheva, O. I, 1997. Regionalizm i perekhod k demokratii', p 89-91 in Rakhshmir, P. Yu. et al (ed) 1997, *Konservatizm: istoriya i sovremennost'*. Perm': Ministerstvo obshchego i professional'nogo obrazovaniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii.

- Public Dissatisfaction Intensifies in Russia, 1995. *USIA Briefing Paper*. Washington: U.S. Information Agency.
- Rose, R – White, S, 1996. Boris Yeltsin's Changing Popular Support, *Studies in Public Policy*, no. 261. Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy.
- Rutland, P, 1997. The Significance of the Chechen Elections, *OMRI Analytical Briefs* 1.
- Tishkov, V, 1997. *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Conflict In and After the Soviet Union – The Mind Aflame*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Whitefield, S, – Evans, G, 1996. Support for Democracy and Political Opposition in Russia, 1993-1995, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 12, 218-242.
- Zhirinovskii, V, 1993. *Poslednii brodok na yug*. Moscow: LDP.

Fifteen Votes and One Voice? The CFSP and Changing Voting Alignments in the UN

Introduction¹

The EU member states have cooperated officially in the foreign policy field since 1970 when the then six members decided to establish European Political Cooperation (EPC). The Six stated that it was time to step up their cooperation in the foreign policy field “so as to bring nearer the day when Europe can speak with one voice” (*The Luxembourg Report* 1970). In 1986, EPC was formally tied to the Community framework by being incorporated into the Single European Act as its “second pillar”. Some five years later EPC changed name to become the EU’s common foreign and security policy (CFSP), which is now constituting the second pillar of the Maastricht Treaty. Although still accused of being anything but effective, this foreign policy cooperation has been both broadened and deepened over the years, and is nowadays an important factor in the foreign policy formulation of all member states.

During the almost thirty years of EPC/CFSP, a number of what might be called “foreign policy instruments” have been shaped to suit the practices of a collective foreign policy. These instruments can be divided into three groups: joint statements, joint actions, and coordination in international fora. The last one, as formulated in the Maastricht Treaty, states that “[t]he Member States shall coordinate their action in international organizations and at international con-

ferences. They shall uphold the common positions in such forums” (TEU Art J.2.3).

The aim of this study is to analyse the use of this particular foreign policy instrument and its development over the last twenty years by looking at the EU member states’ voting behaviour in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Whereas this kind of study has been undertaken before (e.g. Hurwitz 1975; Luif 1995), few seem to have made a systematic attempt to discuss the reasons behind the observed changes. Therefore, a number of factors that are generally thought of as either worsening or improving a unified stance on foreign policy matters are here contrasted against the ups and downs of EU performance in the UNGA. The results are presented in the form of some working hypotheses, or tentative explanations of changes in EU foreign policy behaviour.

The choice of the EU members’ voting behaviour in the UNGA is based, first, on the uniqueness of this assembly both concerning the number of participants and the variety of issues covered. Secondly, the UNGA is also a major arena where the EU member states can demonstrate their ability to act collectively towards the rest of the world (Lindemann 1982:110; Bartali 1992:137; Keatinge 1997:276). The great effort put into the work of trying to reach common EU positions furthermore indicates that the UNGA is a forum in which the EU members have perceived it highly desirable to speak with a single voice (Nuttall 1992:139).

This study consists of three parts. The first one pictures briefly the working procedures that have developed between the EU member states in the General Assembly over the years. The second part deals first with overall trends in EU